

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District

Other names/site number: 24LC2192

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 2630 Airport Road

City or town: Helena State: MT County: Lewis and Clark

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B X C D

<hr/>	
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<hr/>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
<hr/>	
In my opinion, the property <u>X</u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/>	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<hr/>	
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☐

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☒

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☒

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT

County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

2

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

2

1

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/Air-related=aeronautics administration

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/Air-related=aeronautics administration

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Modern

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Concrete, Tile

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District consists of two contributing buildings and one noncontributing building. The Modernist style building complex is located on Airport Road adjacent to the runways on the south side of the Helena Regional Airport in Helena, Montana. Designed by the Helena architectural firm of Ostheimer & Campeau, the brick operations building was constructed in 1958 and expanded in 1965. The adjacent brick garage building was also designed by Ostheimer & Campeau and built in 1965. The two buildings are architecturally similar in design and constructed of the same materials. The 1965 addition of the operations building was, again, designed by Ostheimer & Campeau just before the men dissolved their business partnership in 1965. The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building is the first and only structure to house the operations of the commission and has functioned in that capacity since 1958.¹

¹ The state legislature created the Montana Aeronautics Commission as an independent state agency in 1945. From 1972 to 1991 it was part of the Montana Department of Commerce. In 1991, its operations were absorbed into the newly-reorganized Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). It is now the Aeronautics Division of the MDT.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

Narrative Description

Located on the east side of the town of Helena, Montana, on the south side of the Helena Regional Airport, the Montana Aeronautics Commission Operation Historic District consists of three buildings: the operations building (1958), a garage (1965), and a storage building (2003).² The operations building and garage were designed by the Helena, Montana architectural firm of Ostheimer & Campeau. The storage building is not historic and currently houses airway beacon components and other equipment associated with the operations of the Aeronautics Division.

The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building (one contributing building)

Built in 1958, the Montana Aeronautics Commission Operation Building (MACO) is a one-story, irregularly-shaped Modernist style building with a flat roof with deep eaves over the banks of windows. The building is brick masonry construction, with a built-up roof and concrete foundation. It is located at 2360 Airport Road, on the north side of the road within a corridor of industrial and office buildings, many of which are associated with the operations of the Helena Regional Airport. The building entries are located on the west and south sides of the building, while the rear of the building faces north across the runway to the Helena Regional Airport grounds.

The building is visually divided into three components, a lower L-shaped wing to the front, which houses the offices; a taller L-shaped element to the rear of the offices that houses a taller hangar; and behind this, a lower linear wing that houses the smaller hangars.

The main entrance to the building is on the west façade, which was originally the end of the linear building, but it now represents the end of the L-shaped office wing. It displays the most 'stylish' feature of the building, which is a slightly V-shaped, open, concrete screen wall that supports the pentagon-shaped flat-roof overhang over the entry. Three round metal posts extend from the top of the screen wall to support the wood roof of the overhang, giving it an open, floating appearance. The overhang is fixed to the brick endwall of the building, slightly below the metal coping that finishes the wall. The entry, which is centered under the overhang, consists of a wood door with full-height glass with a wide sidelight to the left. To the right of the door is mounted a brass emblem with the original Montana Aeronautics Commission logo.

The L-shape of the office and conference room wing faces the entrance to the site. The office wing, to the left, has a bank of eight one-over-one-light windows with wood frames, set within the brick masonry wall with brick sills. The upper lights, which comprise about three-quarters of the height of the windows, are fixed. The lower portions are operable windows or solid panels in a 1-2-1-2-1-1 pattern. Sheltering these windows is a deep overhand with exposed rafters and a wood fascia finishing the edge of the roofline.

² Much of the descriptive portion of the administrative building and garage are from: Diana Painter, 2009, *Historic Property Record Form for 24LC2192*, on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

The north or 'field' side of this westerly wing has a slight projection on the west end, faced with three windows of the same design as the windows on the south side of the wing. This houses an executive office. The rest of the north façade of this wing is comprised of a bank of windows that more or less repeats the bank on the south side.

The north-south wing that is located perpendicular to the east-west wing is newer than the original, and displays slightly different materials and detailing. A secondary entry is located at the apex to the "L" of the two wings. This consists of a central door with sidelights and a three-light transom above in anodized aluminum. This wing has a bank of three windows similar to the windows in the west wing, but with slightly different frame details. It houses a conference room, and is anchored by a brick-clad endwall with a short parapet that is slightly higher than the deep eaves over the windows. This wall is brick-clad and displays no openings.

The rear or east-facing side of this wing, like the original wing, displays a bank of windows with a deep overhang that faces the interior work yard. There are three windows on this façade, matching the windows on the west-facing façade.

The east wing of the Aeronautics building houses three hangars. This was part of the original concept of the building, and is still the case. The hangar bay on the west end is high, with an overhead door and vertically-oriented, multi-light, steel-frame window. The bay in the middle is lower in height, as is the rest of this wing. The central portion on the south façade has sliding doors that fold into one another. To the right of this major bank of doors are another steel-frame window and a smaller overhead door.

The endwall of this wing, which faces east, has one vertically-oriented, multi-light, steel-frame window set within the brick endwall (this same window appears also on the north and south facades of this wing; see below). The north façade, which faces the airport runway, consists of two corrugated metal doors separated by a steel frame window similar to the other windows on the building. The doors are lower on the east end and higher on the higher bay toward the west end of this wing. They slide up to open and are reportedly very heavy. A horizontal wood 'arm' projects from the building on this wing on the east and west ends. Its purpose is unknown.

The MACO building is brick masonry construction. The bricks are oversized, a deep red color, and have a combed or striated finish. They are set in a running bond pattern. Other materials on the building include the wood frames of the office windows and wood trim on the fascia. The screen wall is made of up solid concrete masonry units set such that the open portions between the units are square, while the units themselves are rectangular.

The hangar portion of the building appropriately displays different materials. The design of the hangar doors is various; some are new and a few appear to be original to the building. The multi-light units are large windows, with a slightly vertical orientation. The individual lights are small and narrow. There are four rows of lights; the two middle rows appear to be part of an operable sash. The profile of the steel is "T" shaped, and the horizontal rails wrap in front of the vertical mullions. All four windows on the east half of the building display this same design.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

The wood windows of the office portion and the steel windows of the hangar all have brick sills of standard proportions, in contrast to the brick of the building.

Garage (one contributing building)

The garage, located 70' south of the main building, was originally conceived as part of the complex, but was not constructed until 1965. The 35' x 85' building has a rectangular footprint and a moderately-sloped side gable roof with moderate eaves and a ridgeline running east to west; the roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. The garage's façade faces north toward the MACO building and contains four overhead garage doors. The two doors on the east end are double doors and the two doors on the west end are single garage doors. All four doors feature multiple panels and lights; two parallel rows of lights appear in the upper portion of each door. A small mandoor with a single light in the upper portion is located on the west side of the north façade. Like the MACO building, brick masonry construction dominates the majority of the garage. The deep red bricks have a combed, or striated, finish and are set in a running bond pattern; the color of the brick and the finish is the same as on the MACO building. The garage sits on a concrete slab foundation. Five bubble-type plastic skylights project from the south roof slope. There are no other distinguishing features on this building.

Storage Building (one noncontributing building)

The No-style storage building was erected on the site in 2003 and is located about 25' east of the Garage. The gable roof building sits on a concrete foundation. The walls and roof of the building are clad in metal. The 40' x 40' building is oriented north and south with the façade facing north toward the airport runways. The two large bay entries, slightly offset to the east on the façade, contain metal overhead garage-type doors each with three fixed lights. A doorway on the north end of the west elevation holds a metal mandoor. There are no other openings on the building.

Landscaping

The three buildings in this complex are set within an asphalt yard with some concrete pads, and enclosed by a cyclone security fence. They are located within a corridor of mostly industrial buildings on the north side of Airport Road. Other than a small lawn, there are no landscaping or site features to speak of. The Helena Regional Airport runway is located to the north of the site.

Changes over time

The secondary wing (north-south wing) of the MACO building was constructed in 1965 and was designed by Ostheimer & Campeau, the same company that designed the original portion of the building. It features slightly different details, and an anodized aluminum door. The exterior features of the original building wall are still extant inside this newer wing, which houses a conference room. The hangar doors were replaced in 2003. No additional changes to the building have taken place.

Integrity

The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District retains good integrity. The district displays integrity of location and retains its historic association with the Helena airport. It

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

has good design integrity. Although a perpendicular wing was added in 1965, Ostheimer & Campeau designed it with the same architectural vocabulary and materials as the rest of the building (it would likely meet the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation if constructed today). The addition was constructed during the period of significance. The building retains fair integrity of setting and the immediate complex is intact. When constructed the setting was less developed, but this is an industrial corridor whose function is to evolve to meet current needs. The building also retains integrity of materials, workmanship, feeling and association. It is particularly notable for having been built for the Montana Aeronautics Commission (entirely with gasoline tax funds), which still uses the building today in the way it was intended. The Garage also retains integrity as it appears little changed since its construction in 1965 and it functions in its original capacity as a garage and storage facility. The storage building is not historic, but it does not detract significantly from the overall integrity of the site. The offices, hangars, and shops function as a whole, and are part of the same complex.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation

Period of Significance

1958-1967

Significant Dates

1958, 1965

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Ostheimer and Campeau/Architects

E. W. Bunnell/Consulting Engineer

Mel Buck Construction/Builder (1958), Al Johnson Construction Co./Builder (1965).

Johnston & Sharbono/Builder (garage/1965)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations (MACO) Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at a local level of significance. Under Criterion A, the MACO building and garage were constructed specifically to house the administrative functions of the Montana Aeronautics Commission. In addition to licensing private and commercial pilots, the commission was involved in the design,

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

construction, and ownership of community airports and airfields, assisted the Civil Air Patrol, conducted search and rescue operations, and was instrumental in the development of federal and state aviation regulations and laws. The Modernist-style MACO building is representative of the maturing of Montana's aeronautical and aviation industries in the wake of World War II.

Built in 1958 and expanded in 1965, the appearance of the MACO building has not changed significantly since the mid-1960s. Although the building features an addition, it was constructed during the period of significance, designed by the same architects as the original mass, and designed in a sympathetic manner. The building is an excellent and representative example of a Modernist style government administration building that includes many of the features associated with the architectural style. The adjacent garage, built in 1965, was designed by the same architectural firm that designed the administrative building and addition; the stylistic similarities, including the use of materials, provide a cohesive association between the two. Both buildings are still associated with the Helena, Montana airport and other stylistically similar aviation-related buildings, specifically the Federal Aviation Administration building (1964) about 500' to the west, and the old Montana Air National Guard complex adjacent to the MACO complex on the east. The 2003 storage shed is considered a noncontributing resource of the district.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations (MACO) Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the history of aeronautics and aviation in Montana after World War II. Prior to World War II, the regulation of the aviation industry in the state was minimal. Shortly before the conclusion of the war, the Montana State Legislature, at the urging of Governor Sam Ford, passed legislation creating the Montana Aeronautics Commission to provide a degree of regulation for the private and commercial aviation industry in the state. The legislature created the commission to police the industry in the state and to enforce state and federal laws regarding aviation in the United States. The first regulation enacted by the new commission in 1945 was the licensing of commercial and private pilots operating in Montana. The commission was also responsible for the design, construction, leasing, and operating small community airports throughout the state. It worked closely with the Civil Air Patrol during the Cold War, conducted search and rescue operations in conjunction with local authorities, kept statistics for the aviation industry in Montana, and aggressively sought to regulate commercial air traffic in the state according to laws passed by the US Congress. As the century wore on, and the importance of aviation to the military, commerce, and private sections increased, so did the responsibilities of the aeronautics commission. By the late 1950s, the commission had outgrown its rented quarters in downtown Helena. Commission director Frank Wiley, himself a pilot, successfully lobbied the 1957 state legislature to authorize the construction of a commission operations building adjacent to the then called Helena Municipal Airport. The Montana Department of Transportation's Montana Aeronautics Division operations are still based in the building. The modern architecture of the building reflects the significance of aviation in Montana. The Montana Aeronautics Division

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

continues to play a critical role in the aviation industry in Montana from its headquarters in this building. The commission building also retains a strong association with the adjacent Helena Regional Airport.

The district is also eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an example of late twentieth century Modernist architecture in Montana. The buildings display many of the architectural features common to the style, including the use of natural colors and textures, large windows, and lack of decorative detail. Built in 1958, the administrative building was expanded and the interior remodeled in 1965 to reflect the Aeronautics Commission's increased responsibilities in the 1960s. The same architectural firm, Ostheimer & Campeau, who designed the original building in 1958, also designed the expansion in 1965. The addition is architecturally compatible to the main building and utilizes the same materials. The same occurred for the garage, also designed by Ostheimer & Campeau, and built in 1965. There have been few changes to the buildings since 1965 and the district remains an exemplary example of a Modernist style government construction. The Modernist architectural theme displayed by the Aeronautics Commission building can also be seen in the Federal Aviation Administration building (1964) about 500' to the west and the old Montana Air National Guard complex adjacent to the MACO complex on the east.

History

Helena, Montana

In late July 1864, four prospectors, erroneously called the Four Georgians, discovered extraordinarily rich gold placers on Last Chance Gulch about two miles southwest of the Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District. The discovery generated a stampede to the new diggings and, by late 1864, hundreds of miners worked the winding gulch in search of riches. A mining camp arose at the south end of the gulch and on the benches above both sides of the gulch. In October 1864, the miners and business owners christened the new camp "Helena" at a meeting of the Miners' Court.³

Unlike remote Virginia City and Bannack, Helena was strategically located near the Mullan Military Road that connected the heads of navigation on the Missouri River at Fort Benton and the Columbia River at Fort Walla Walla in Washington Territory. It was also located very near two already established mining camps, Montana City and Silver City. The richness of the mines in the Helena area contributed to the establishment of new roads to Virginia City, Bannack, Butte, the Gallatin Valley, and, after December 1864, Confederate Gulch in the nearby Big Belt Mountains. Helena's central location on the territory's transportation network, proximity to good agricultural land in the adjacent Helena Valley and to other mining districts made it the preeminent settlement in Montana Territory by the early 1870s. In recognition of its ascendancy in the territory, the Montana Territorial Legislature designated Helena the territorial capital in 1874 and relocated it from Virginia City, whose fortunes had been in decline for several years.⁴

³ Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt*, 78; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 67.

⁴ Burlingame, *The Montana Frontier*, (Helena: State Publishing, 1942), 387, Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt*, 82.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

Despite its new role as the territorial capital, Helena economy stagnated as the surrounding mines began to play out. The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railway (NPRR) in Helena in June 1883 and the Montana Central Railroad (MCRR) in 1887, however, sparked an extensive building boom in the territorial capital. The boom was characterized by the greatest period of sustained growth in the city's young history and is still evident today in the large numbers of substantial brick and stone commercial buildings along the gulch and in the city's mansion district on the upper west side. The influx of newcomers to the city drawn by the railroads, the economic boom and associated commercial, industrial, and business development, resulted in the expansion of the city's residential areas to the east and northwest of the original Last Chance Gulch mining camp.⁵

During that ten-year period between 1883 and 1893, Helena transformed itself from a mining camp into a progressive modern city dominated by masonry buildings that would, its residents hoped, thwart the periodic fires that decimated the city. From Helena, railroad branch lines radiated out to mining camps in Jefferson County, Marysville, and Rimini. Helena-based capitalists invested in mining, railroads, and ranching to the point where the city gained the reputation of having more millionaires per capita than any other city in the United States. Along with the railroads, Helena was also the hub of wagon roads to all points of the territory. By 1889, Montana satisfied the requirements of the federal government and she became the 41st state in November 1889.

By the early 1890s, Helena's significance almost rivaled that of nearby Butte. The Panic of 1893, however, profoundly impacted the city. Investments failed and many businessmen (and banks) went bankrupt. The once heady days of expansion of the 1880s, suddenly halted. In 1892, though, the federal government established Fort William Henry Harrison near Helena and the city became the permanent capital of the state in 1894. The effects of the nationwide economic depression eased after the discovery of gold in Alaska and the Yukon. Helena settled into a long period of sustained growth with the stable economic base based on state government.

On October 18th and 31st, 1935, Helena witnessed major earthquakes that shook the city. Numerous larger buildings were severally damaged; many sustained structural damaged and were lost. The earthquakes effects weren't limited to larger buildings as smaller buildings such as houses also incurred damage. No pattern was evident regarding damage from the quakes; some homes were completely destroyed while other nearby houses suffered no apparent ill effect. Because of the quakes, the use of stone and brick in construction decreased dramatically.⁶

By 1940, Helena again achieved a population similar to that of its 1890s glory. New construction increased, dominated by homes east and west of the downtown business district,

⁵ Vivian Paladin and Jean Baucus, *Helena: An Illustrated History*, (Norfolk, VA: The Donning Press, 1983), 46-53.

⁶ Jacobson, Herbert L, Byrd, Donald, L. and Juisto, Chere. *Helena: A Historic City*. Montana Historical Society, 1982, 14.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

near the older more established neighborhoods. The entry of the United States into World War II greatly aided Helena's and the surrounding area's economy. The East Helena smelter operated at full capacity processing lead, a critical material in the war effort. The increase in rail transport resulted in the hiring of more train crews and maintenance personnel. Smelter and the railroads crews were considered as part of the strategic labor force, and, exempt from the draft. Fort Harrison, west of town, served as an Army training camp for the First Special Forces, a combined American and Canadian paratroop regiment. After the War, the return of veterans sparked another building boom in Helena with hundreds of homes built in both the eastside and westside areas of the city.

Helena continued to slowly grow and by the 1950s, the city shared in the economic boom then enjoyed by the United States. Helena's slow but steady population growth reflected the expansion of state government services after World War II. Not surprising (and mirroring a national trend), returning veterans and other resident began purchasing homes away from Helena's urban core, especially to the east and north of the historic neighborhoods. The expansion away from downtown resulted in the establishment of businesses to serve them, specifically service stations, grocery stores, drugstores, motels, and drive-in restaurants. In 1950, Helena had a population of 17,581 people. By 1960, that number had grown by 15.1 percent to 20,227.⁷ The growth of the city translated to the aeronautics field too.

A Brief History of Aeronautics in Montana

The history of flight in Montana began with daredevil aerialists that performed in fairs and carnivals across the state. Trapeze artists, balloonists and parachutists – and sometime a combination of all three – thrilled the crowds at the Montana State Fair in Helena and similar gatherings in the 1880s and 1890s. Early aerialists possessed an adventurous spirit that often overwhelmed reason. The list of those hurt and killed in their pursuit of conquering the sky is distressingly long, especially through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Means of personal mechanical transportation – automobiles and airplanes – were exciting curiosities. Their manufacturers desired that they become mainstream, and piqued the public's interests by holding exhibitions at fairs and other events nation-wide.

In 1901, Absarokee farmer Thomas Chalkley Benbow began drawing plans for an airship, and secured the patent. In Red Lodge, April 1902, with the help of some backers, he formed the American Aerial Navigation Company to construct an airship called the "Meteor," which he entered in the St. Louis Exposition Fair in 1904.

Pilots returning from World War I established small airfields in several Montana towns. One early airfield was in Miles City – established in 1920 by Earl Vance and A.W. Stephenson, both Montana aviation pioneers. Earl's wife Esther Combes Vance, holds the honor as the first woman licensed to fly airplanes commercially in Montana, and the twenty-second in the nation. The Vances established a flying service business in Great Falls by the late 1920s. Soon other

⁷ Vivian Paladin and Jean Baucus, *Helena: An Illustrated History*, (Norfolk, VA: Donning Company, 1983), 190.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

aviation businesses sprang up including Yellowstone Air by 1928, Johnson Flying School in Missoula, and Steve's Flying School in Butte.⁸

Aeronautics in Helena

Aeronautics also played an important role in Helena's history. The first recorded airplane flight in Montana took place at the Montana State Fairgrounds in Helena on September 26, 1910. Pilot J.C. "Bud" Mars made two successful flights that day in his Curtiss Aeroplane, named "Skylark."⁹

On September 30, 1911, Cromwell Dixon, the "Boy Bird," took off from the State Fairgrounds and headed west over the Continental Divide, the first pilot to do so.¹⁰ Sadly, the nineteen-year-old Dixon died a few days later while performing aerial stunts at the Spokane Fair in Washington.¹¹

Another famous aviator, who hailed from Montana, came to the Helena fairgrounds on September 23, 1913. Young Katherine Stinson, the fourth licensed woman aviator in the country, earned her wings as a stunt pilot in 1912, and soon became an international celebrity as the "Flying Schoolgirl." On a tour promoting the idea that airplanes could be used by the U.S. Postal Service, Stinson thrilled the Montana State Fair crowds by not only performing stunts, but also flying bags of mail from the fairgrounds and dropping them onto Helena's downtown post office: "Another feature never seen in Montana before will be two flights daily by Aviatrix Katherine [sic] Stinson, a 20-year-old brunette, who won her pilots license on the daring she displayed. She will use a Wright biplane, the first seen in the state."¹²

By 1926, the Helena city commission established an airfield north of the Carroll College campus on the grounds of the municipal golf course constructed the previous year. The golf course and airfield shared space for just under a year. Clubhouse buildings sat next to a hangar and other outbuildings for the airfield. The dual purpose of the site didn't always function very well. Pilots waiting to land on the fairways often had to repeatedly buzz golfers to get them out of the way. One aviator later wrote that were "many golfers who were not too air-minded, yet were rightfully conscious of an airplane competing with them for use of the fairways and even the greens. I remember distinctly one irate golfer who very capably defended himself by throwing an iron at my airplane as I buzzed him to get him off the fairway so I could land."¹³

⁸ Frank W. Wiley, *Montana and the Sky: Beginning of Aviation in the Land of the Shining Mountains*, (Helena: Montana Aeronautics Commission, 1966), pp. 99, 102, 104-108, 141, 144.

⁹ "Helena Sees Mars in Successful Flights," *The Daily Missoulian*, September 28, 1910. "J.C. Mars and Aeroplane Skylark, Helena, 1910," Photograph. Montana Historical Society Photo Archives, PAC 79-36, unprocessed collection.

¹⁰ "Across the Divide Dixon Sails Easily," *The Daily Missoulian*, October 1, 1911.

¹¹ "Conqueror of the Rockies is Killed at Spokane Fair in Fall of 100 Feet," *The Daily Missoulian*, October 3, 1911.

¹² "Nothing Can Mar State Fair's Success," *The Daily Missoulian*, September 21, 1913; Wiley, pp. 76-77; Montana Aeronautics Commission Photographs, PAC 79-36, unprocessed collection.

¹³ Jon Axline, "The Lone Eagle in the Big Sky: Charles Lindbergh's 1927 Montana Tour," *Centennial Aviation & Business Journal*, vol. 5, no. 9 (September 2004), pp. 20C-21C.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

In September 1927, Charles Lindbergh landed in the Spirit of St. Louis at the airfield after thrilling thousands of spectators at the State Fairgrounds who came to welcome the national hero to Helena. By late 1927, however, the situation at the golf course/airfield had become intolerable. There was more than one occasion where golfers intentionally delayed aircraft from taking off or landing and vice versa. Shortly after Lindbergh's visit, the Helena city commission looked elsewhere to establish a municipal airport. In early 1928, the city designated a site a couple of miles east of Helena as the new municipal airport. The airport consisted of grass landing strips and a scattering of hangars that were intended primarily for airmail service and flying schools. The airport officially opened to much fanfare on July 20, 1928. The same year, National Parks Airlines began service in Helena; Western Airlines subsumed National Park Airlines in 1937.¹⁴

The first accredited aeronautics school in the nation began in Helena in 1931 under the tutelage of R.E. Morrison and Bill Fahren.¹⁵ Morrison also began the Morrison Flying Service that operated out of the Helena airport until 1995, ending with the sale of the air taxi and service arms of the business.

It wasn't until 1936, however, that the city built an Art Deco style administration building at the airport (the city demolished the building in 2006).¹⁶ By the time the Montana Pilots Association was founded in 1939, Montana boasted 77 landing strips and unimproved fields.¹⁷

At the time the Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building was constructed in 1958, the area around the Helena Municipal Airport was sparsely developed. The area encompassed three hangars (including the Morrison Flying Service hangar), an office/restaurant, a storage building, and the 1936 terminal (which serviced Northwest Airlines). All were spread out along Airport Road, then known as Phoenix Avenue. The construction of the Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building sparked a building boom at the airport that ended in 1966. During that time, the Montana Air National Guard built a hangar immediately east of the MACO building, the Federal Air Administration built its district office to the west of the MACO building, and the city built a maintenance building at the east end of the row of buildings. In 1961, the City added a tower to the terminal building and lengthened the runway to accommodate larger passenger planes. In 1966, the city completed its remodeling of the terminal and built twelve small hangars at the site. In 1967, the city incorporated the airport into city limits. The MACO

¹⁴ Airport History, found at <http://helenaaairport.com/airport-history/>, accessed February 12, 2017.

¹⁵ "School of Aeronautics—That's How It All Started," *The Independent Record*, November 2, 1967.

¹⁶ Martin J. Kidston, *Cromwell Dixon: A Boy & His Plane, 1892-1911*, (Helena: Far Country Press, 2007), 132; "New Course Opened by Exhibition Match and Goodyear Ball Tourney," *The Helena Independent*, 6 June 1926; "Municipal Airport to Have Water Main, During Week," *The Helena Independent*, 20 April 1928; "Plans for the Hangar at the Airport Filed with the City Council," *The Helena Independent*, 3 July 1928; "Aviators Prepare for Airport Show Friday Afternoon," *The Helena Independent*, 19 July 1928; "WPA Spends Huge Sum on Aviation Work in Montana," *The Helena Independent*, 2 November 1936.

¹⁷ Diana Painter, 2009, *Historic Property Record Form for 24LC2192*, on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

Building represents the expansion of the Helena Municipal Airport into a modern facility able to better handle the demands placed on it by increasing air traffic in the 1960s.¹⁸

The Montana Aeronautics Commission

As World War II drew to a close, federal and federal aviation responsibilities were poised to significantly expand. Realizing the need for a state authority to regulate the industry and provide some consistent control, Governor Sam Ford appointed several legislators as his special Committee on Aviation at the beginning of the session in January 1945. Ford directed the committee to develop legislation for the impending 1945 legislative session to create a Montana Aeronautics Commission and specify what the panel would be responsible for and how it would be funded. Consequently, on January 23, 1945, the committee introduced House Bill 84 for the creation of the aeronautics commission. The bill outlined the commission's responsibilities, how the members of the panel would be appointed, office staff, and how it would be funded. The bill passed both the House and Senate and Ford signed the bill into law on March 3, 1945.¹⁹

The new seven-member Montana Aeronautics Commission had "authority over all phases of civil aviation in Montana, including licensing of airports, aircraft repair shops, air schools, and aeronautics instructors." The MACO was funded entirely from a one cent per gallon tax on airplane fuel. Further, the commission was "empowered to designate a state airways system, assist in acquiring, operating and maintaining municipal airports or other landing areas."²⁰ The new Montana Aeronautics Commission conducted its first meeting in Helena in June 1945 and established the basic organization of the commission. In July, the MACO opened an office in the Montana Club building downtown and hired a secretary and stenographer to handle the operation's administrative details. It also immediately began gathering information on airports, pilots, airplanes and aviation schools in the state. In August 1945, the commission adopted a logo designed by Montana Highway Department graphic artist Irvin "Shorty" Shope. That same month, it authorized the issuance of licenses to private and commercial pilots. In early 1946, the commission began the search for a director. In February of that year, commission chairman Dr. H. Chatland of Missoula hired long time pilot Frank W. Wiley to fill the director's position.²¹

¹⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1958, viewed at www.sanborn.umi.com; "Hangar Nearing Completion at Airport," *The Independent Record*, 11 January 1959; "Dignitaries Like Tower," *The Independent Record*, 28 August 1961; "Coming In on New Runway," *The Independent Record*, 16 October 1961; "State Pays Some Lawyers More Than Legal Chief," *The Independent Record*, 19 December 1961; "FAA to Dedicate Helena Airport Building Saturday," *The Independent Record*, 16 October 1965; "Contract Awarded for Airport Remodeling Work," *The Independent Record*, 20 September 1965; "Helena Municipal Airport Records Banner Year," *The Independent Record*, 6 February 1966.

¹⁹ *House Journal of the Twenty-ninth Legislative Assembly of the State of Montana*, (Helena: State Publishing Co., 1945), xlv, 78; *Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana Passed by the Twenty-ninth Legislative Assembly in Regular Session*, (Helena: State Publishing Co., 1945), 330-337; "Aviation Bill Explained to Assembly," *The Independent Record*, 6 February 1945.

²⁰ "Measure Creating Montana Aeronautics Commission Makes Appearance in House," *The Independent Record*, 24 January 1945.

²¹ "Gov. Ford Names Members of Aviation Board," *The Independent Record*, 23 June 1945; "Support Pledged to Aviation Group," *The Montana Standard*, 10 July 1945; "Aeronautics Board Names Missoula Man for Chairman," *The Independent Record*, 15 July 1945; "Aeronautics Board will Establish Offices in City," *The Independent Record*, 1 August 1945; "Aeronautics Group Adopts Seal at Meeting Here," *The Independent*

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

Born in Miles City in March 1900, Frank Wiley graduated from Custer County Highway School in 1918 and attended the University of Montana in Missoula for a short time before his interest in aviation asserted its dominance in his life. He learned to fly in 1920 after a short time working as a airplane mechanic in Miles City. He went to work for Ryan Airlines in San Diego, California and spent several years working for other aviation outfits around the Sunshine State before returning to Miles City in 1927. Wiley operated the Yellowstone Flying School in Miles City until 1930 when he went to work as an airline pilot for a company that flew between St. Paul, Minnesota and Seattle. He returned to California in 1932 and worked as a commercial pilot and flight instructor until 1935 when he returned to Montana. From 1940 until 1943, Wiley was employed by Johnson Flying Service in Missoula. In 1943, he enlisted in the United States Army Air Force and served overseas until his discharge in 1945.²² Wiley began work as the directory of the aeronautics commission in February 1946.²³

The Montana Aeronautics Commission proved far-sighted in their attempts to improve safety in flying in Montana. Together with the Montana Aviation Trades Association, the Commission hosted the first Flight Instructor Refresher Course in the United States in 1962.²⁴ Twenty students participated in the Helena event.

The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District

The Montana Aeronautics Commission had been headquartered in the Electric Block on West Sixth Avenue in Helena since its creation by the state legislature in 1945. By 1956, though, the commission's significantly increased federal and state responsibilities had made their quarters much too small to handle the demands placed on it. Accordingly, director Frank Wiley first broached the subject of a new headquarters building at the Helena Municipal Airport to the commission in early 1957. In April 1957, the state Board of Examiners directed Wiley "to investigate the possibility of obtaining from the city of Helena airport land on which to build an office for his commission and a hangar." Prior to Examiners' instruction, however, Wiley had a tentative plan for a commission operations building and an estimated cost for the building at a

Record, 21 August 1945; "Major Frank Wiley to be Manager of the Air Commission," *The Independent Record*, 14 February 1946.

²² Wiley was a reservist in the USAAF and then US Air Force until 1963, attaining the rank of colonel. "Frank W. Wiley," *The Miles City Star*, 4 November 1983.

²³ Frank Wiley was director of the MACO until November 1961 when commission chairman Clarence Anthony removed him from the position and replaced him with Charles Lynch. The commission retained Wiley as a special advisor to the commission with his primary responsibility being the writing of *Montana and the Sky: Beginning of Aviation in the Land of Shining Mountains*. Shortly after the aeronautics commission published the book in 1966, Wiley retired from the commission. He died in Shreveport, Louisiana in November 1983. "Major Frank Wiley to be Manager of the Air Commission," *The Independent Record*, 14 February 1946; "Lynch Replaces Wiley as MACO Boss," *The Independent Record*, 10 November 1961; "Wiley Recalls the Barnstorming Days," *The Miles City Star*, 9 July 1978; "Frank W. Wiley," *The Independent Record*, 4 November 1983.

²⁴ "Montana, Aviation Firsts" found at http://www.dot.state.mn.us/aero/aviationeducation/museum/aviation_firsts/montana.html, accessed February 28, 2017.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

little over \$52,000. The proposed building would be located a short distance east of the airport's administration building (demolished in 2006).²⁵

By mid-June 1957, the aeronautics commission was in negotiations with the City of Helena for a lease at the present site of the operations building. On July 29th, the city commission passed Resolution No. 5549 authorizing the mayor to enter into a lease agreement with the state for the building. City officials signed the lease on August 19th. It wasn't until early October 1957, that the Board of Examiners began advertising for bids for the construction of operations building and a hangar. The buildings were designed by the Helena architectural firm of Ostheimer & Campeau.²⁶

Eight contractors submitted bids for the construction of the building. The Board of Examiners chose the \$71,773 proposal submitted by the Cascade, Montana-based Mel Buck Construction Company as the winning bid. The building material for the structure had arrived at the construction site by mid-February 1958 and construction began on the building in earnest by early April. Director Wiley anticipated the building would be ready for occupancy in July 1958. Concurrent with the construction of the building, the Board of Examiners awarded a project to an unknown contractor for the construction of 6,300 square yards of "double bituminous" paving at the operations building.²⁷

Despite the completion of the operations building in July 1958, it was not until November that the aeronautics commission held an open house to dedicate its new headquarters.²⁸ The commission formed a dedication committee consisting of Great Falls, Montana insurance agent Ed Cogswell and Harold DeSilva, a Plentywood, Montana businessman. The committee set the date for the dedication, including a flag-raising ceremony, for November 7, 1958. The festivities included an open house from 10 am to 3 pm with the flag-raising at 1 pm. Governor J. Hugo Aronson agreed to provide the keynote address at the dedication at 1:30 pm that afternoon. Invitations went out on October 23rd and Wiley made arrangements with Jorgenson's Holiday Inn Restaurant to cater the affair. The money needed for the coffee and donuts, which amounted

²⁵ "Higher Wages for Grounds Keepers Asked," *The Independent Record*, 18 April 1957.

²⁶ "Dog Control Plan Put into Action," *The Independent Record*, 17 June 1957; "Legal Advertising," *The Independent Record*, 29 July 1957; "Lifting of Health Board Ban on Sewer Extensions in Helena Area is Announced," *The Independent Record*, 19 August 1957; "Legal Advertising," *The Independent Record*, 5 November 1957.

²⁷ "Airport Building Contract is Awarded Today," *The Independent Record*, 14 November 1957; "Wiley Says Work on Aeronautics Building to Start," *The Independent Record*, 12 February 1958; "Front View," *The Independent Record*, 23 February 1958; "New Airport Building Ready July 1," *The Independent Record*, 11 April 1958; "Legal Advertising," *The Independent Record*, 21 February 1958.

²⁸ The Montana Board of Examiners, William Ostheimer, and Frank Wiley accepted the building from contractor Mel Buck on July 10th, yet the staff didn't move into the building until just prior to the dedication of the facility in early November. The reason for the discrepancy has not been determined. "Minutes of Meeting-7/10-11/58," Montana Aeronautics Commission Records, RS 77, box 6, folder 2. Montana Historical Society Research Center, Helena, Montana; "New Aeronautics Commission Building Ready," *The Independent Record*, 2 November 1958; "New Aeronautics Building," *The Independent Record*, 6 November 1958.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

to \$80, was donated to the event by the aeronautics commission members and commission employees.²⁹

At least 95 people attended the dedication of the new operations building on November 7th. Aeronautics commission members and employees served as hosts for the open house. Governor Aronson, a longtime supporter of commercial aviation in the state, delivered a short speech after the flag-raising. He told the crowd that the new Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building represented “the progress which Montana is making in this Jet Age” and also recalled his role in the creation of the commission while a state legislator in 1945. The “Gallop in’ Swede” concluded his remarks,

It is a sincere pleasure and great honor for me to be here today to officially dedicate this Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations building in behalf of the people of the great state of Montana. I want to pledge that this only marks another step in the development of the Treasure State.³⁰

The total cost of the new building was \$80,841 with another \$3,915 spent on furniture and fixtures.³¹

Within a few years, however, the aeronautics commission discovered that its brand new building was too small. In March 1965, Governor Sam Ford’s Committee on Aviation introduced House Bill (HB) 84 to the state legislature. The bill would appropriate \$1,867,210 for the acquisition of land and “the repair, remodeling, renovation, construction and furnishings of buildings and other improvements” for the Fish and Game Commission (now Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks), Department of Agriculture, Montana State University, and the Aeronautics Commission. The bill received legislative approval on March 28th and Governor Tim Babcock signed it into law that same day. In April 1965, the commission advertised for bids to construct an addition to its operations building. The planned addition included an airplane hangar, conference room, and space for a draftsman and engineer. On May 12, 1965, the commission awarded a \$16,400 contract to Helena builder Al Johnson to build the garage. It also awarded an \$18,865 contract to Johnston & Sharbono for the addition. When completed in late 1965, the new hangar housed the commission’s search and rescue aircraft along with the state’s plane, a 1962 Beechcraft Queen

²⁹ Director Wiley required each commissioner and employee to contribute \$10 to the fund. “Minutes of Meeting-10/6/58,” RS 77, Box 6, folder 2; Invitation, RS 77, Box 11, file 23; Letter, J. Hugo Aronson, Montana Governor, to Frank Wiley, Aeronautics Commission Director, RS 77, Box 11, file 23; Letter, Jorgenson’s Holiday Inn Restaurant to Wiley, RS 77, Box 11, folder 23; “Minutes of Meeting – Nov. 6 & 7, 1958, RS 77, Box 6, folder 2; “Helena ‘Must’ Stop for Powder Puffs,” *The Independent Record*, 6 November 1958.

³⁰ Dedication Ceremony of Aeronautics Commission Operations Building, remarks by Governor J. Hugo Aronson, RS 77, Box 11, folder 23.

³¹ Guest Register, RS 77, Box 11, folder 24; Dedication Ceremony of Aeronautics Commission Operations Building, remarks by Governor J. Hugo Aronson, RS 77, Box 11, folder 23; Building Fund, Ibid; “Governor Urges New Airports,” *The Montana Standard*, 8 November 1958.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

Air airplane. The Ostheimer & Campeau firm designed the addition, one of their last projects before the partners dissolved the company.³²

Ostheimer & Campeau, Architects

William R. Ostheimer and Napoleon Joseph "Joe" Campeau operated a successful architectural partnership in Helena, Montana from 1957 to 1965. Born in New York City in July 1924, Ostheimer served in World War II and then attended Montana State College in Bozeman, earning a degree in Architectural Engineering in 1950. He worked for an architectural firm in Great Falls, Montana until 1952 when he moved to Helena. After working for Helena architect Sigvald Berg for three years, he opened his own firm on West Sixth Avenue in Helena in 1955. Two years later, in 1957, he formed a partnership with Campeau.³³

Born in Butte in May 1925, Joe Campeau served in World War II and attended Purdue University before transferring to Montana State College, where he met Ostheimer. Campeau graduated from the college with a degree in architecture in 1952. He worked for the architectural firm of Brinkman and Lennon in Kalispell, Montana before moving to Helena and going into business with his old college classmate, William Ostheimer in 1957.³⁴

Ostheimer and Campeau designed several modernist style buildings around the Helena area in the late 1950s and 1960s, including the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant on Getchell Street, the Chamber of Commerce building on Lyndale Avenue, the County Shop on Cooney Drive, and the Ray Bjork School. The firm also designed modifications to the interiors of existing business blocks in downtown Helena. The men also developed a standardized plan for Montana Highway Department rest areas on primary and Interstate highways.³⁵ The men dissolved their partnership in 1965. Ostheimer left Montana for Seattle, Washington where he pursued a career in urban planning. He died in January 2013. Joe Campeau remained in Helena and was an active architect in the Queen City until the early 2000s. He played a significant (if controversial role) in Helena's Urban Renewal program between 1968 and 1975. Campeau died in Helena in July 2015.³⁶

³² *House Journal*, xlv, 78; "Legislative Calendar," *The Independent Record*, 7 March 1965; J. D. Holmes, "Legislature Approved \$18 Million Building Program," *The Independent Record*, 28 March 1965; "Bid Openings Set May 12; Include MSU Skyscraper," *The Independent Record*, 19 April 1965; "Invitation for Bids," *The Independent Record*, 30 April 1965; "Billings Firm Awarded Sky Scraper Contract," *The Billings Gazette*, 18 May 1965; "Helena Municipal Airport Records Banner Year," *The Independent Record*, 6 February 1966.

³³ "William Ostheimer has Opened Office Here," *The Independent Record*, 23 October 1955; "Architectural Partnership Formed," *The Independent Record*, 17 April 1957; US Census Records, viewed at www.ancestry.com.

³⁴ Montana Modernist Oral History: Summary of Joe Campeau interview, on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, Montana; Obituary: Joe Campeau, 3 July 2015. Viewed at www.bozemandailychronicle.com.

³⁵ Historic American Engineering Record. Raynolds' Pass Rest Area (HAER No. MT-148), Prepared for the National Park Service by the Montana Department of Transportation, April 2014.

³⁶ *Polk's Helena City Directories*, (Helena: R. L. Polk and Co., 1958-1966); Montana Modernist Oral History; Joe Campeau obituary.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

Ercell W. Bunnell

An architectural engineer with Hamill and Associates in Butte, Bunnell arrived in Butte from Spokane in 1956. Born in Missouri in 1893, he lived in Great Falls and Bozeman prior to moving to Spokane. In 1930, he listed his occupation as farmer in the Gallatin Valley and as a sales engineer in Bozeman in 1940. A crack shot who participated in shooting contests throughout the state, he died of an apparent heart attack while attending a tournament in Great Falls in September 1959.³⁷

Mel Buck

Born in Great Falls in February 1920, Mel Buck was educated in Cascade schools. By 1940, he was living in Great Falls with his father. Both men listed their trade as carpenter in the census. Shortly after the United States entered World War II, Buck enlisted in the US Navy and was honorably discharged at the end of the war. In 1950, he formed the Mel Buck Construction Company. Over the course his career, he built the Governor's Mansion (1959) and was involved in the construction of eleven of the original buildings on the College of Great Falls campus. He also constructed a sewer line in Whitefish, the gymnasium on the Northern Montana College campus in Havre (1960), sections of the Helena Valley Irrigation District system (1961), and a modernist style building at 901 North Last Chance Gulch in Helena (1965). In April 1965, Buck was nearly crushed to death when a tractor overturned on him on a project on North Montana Avenue in Helena. After a long recovery, Buck retired to his ranch near Cascade and died in Great Falls in May 1995.³⁸

Al Johnson Construction Company

Long time Helena resident Al Johnson gained experience as a building contractor while employed by his father and uncle. He worked for Johnson Brothers until going into business for himself as Al Johnson Construction Company in August 1945. In January 1966, Al's son, Noral, took over the contracting business and his father became an advisor. The newly christened Johnson Builders, Inc. claimed that the old "Johnson firm [had] been closely associated with the progress of the Capital City" and had completed more than \$6 million worth of new homes and commercial buildings in Helena. Johnson Builders continued until March 1979 when the company ceased operations.³⁹

Johnston & Sharbono (Sharbono Construction Company)

John J. Johnston and Delbert Sharbono partnered together to form a general contracting firm in Helena in March 1965. Johnston was also the president of Quality Homes, Inc. and the business

³⁷ "Ercell Bunnell Dies Suddenly," *The Montana Standard*, 21 September 1959; US Census Records.

³⁸ "Mel Buck," *The Great Falls Tribune*, 12 May 1995; US Census Records; "Cascade Man Injured in Accident Here," *The Independent Record*, 1 April 1965.

³⁹ US Census Records, viewed at www.ancestry.com; *Helena City Directories*, (Kansas City, MO: R. L. Polk & Co., 1927-1979); Business Entity Search; "Advertisement," *The Independent Record*, 21 January 1966.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

apparently concentrated on the construction of houses in the Helena area. The partnership dissolved in 1970 and has been known as Sharbono Construction Company since then.⁴⁰

Architectural Significance—Modern Architecture⁴¹

The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District represents Modernist architectural style government construction in the late 1950s to mid-1960s. European architects developed the style between the world wars and immigrated to the United States with it in the 1930s. Late 19th and early 20th century American architects, such as Louis Sullivan, Frank Furness, Bertram Goodhue, and Frank Lloyd Wright also experimented with the style. Other “modernist” styles, such Craftsman and Art Deco, were inspired by decorative movements and responses to industrialization, eventually resulting in a Modern style, that by the 1950s was mostly stripped of its originality and philosophical connotations. The box form and a lack of ornamentation became defining elements. Instead of shape and ornament, Mid-century Modernism depended on patterns of building materials to create unique designs.⁴² The relatively simple and unadorned architectural style embraced functionalism and rationalism and utilized new materials and building methods. Buildings exhibit the lack of decorative detail, use of materials in place of decorative materials, utilizes natural colors and textures “to embellish the building” (in this case striated brick), and incorporates large windows (in the administration building) to maximize natural lighting in the interior. The administration building has many structural details left exposed, such as the aluminum-framed windows, exposed rafters on deep eave overhangs, and a concrete block screen wall. The sprawling complex also features an addition that, while built later, embellishes the original design of the building. Helena architects William R. Ostheimer and Joe Campeau designed several Modernist-style government and school buildings during their partnership, including the standard Montana Highway Department rest area restroom structures and the Ray Bjork and Smith elementary schools in Helena. All are representative of the Modernist style, featuring simple lines and massing, use of brick, and new types of wood materials. The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District serves as a good example of the post-WWII Modernist government construction and is representative of the type of buildings designed by Ostheimer and Campeau.

⁴⁰ Business Entity Search at the Montana Secretary of State’s Office. Viewed at www.mtsosfilings.gov; “Building Permits Issued for New School Building,” *The Independent Record*, 17 July 1966.

⁴¹ This section is adapted from Diana J. Painter, *Montana Post-World War II Architectural Survey and Inventory*. Prepared for the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT, December 2010.

⁴² This context is developed from Roth and the architectural context from Diane J. Painter’s “Montana Post-World War II Architectural Survey and Inventory, Historical Context and Survey Report,” 2010.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

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District

Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

County and State

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Lewis and Clark, MT

Name of Property

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District
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County and State

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Support Pledged to Aviation Group." *The Montana Standard*, 10 July 1945.

United States Census Records. Viewed at www.ancestry.com.

Wiley, Frank W., *Montana and the Sky*. Montana Aeronautics Commission, 1966.

"Wiley Recalls the Barnstorming Days." *The Miles City Star*, 9 July 1978.

"Wiley Says Work on Aeronautics Building to Start." *The Independent Record*, 12 February 1958.

Wolle, Muriell Sibell. *Montana Pay Dirt*. Athens, OH: Sage Books, 1963.

"Work of Montana Aeronautics Building to Start," *Montana Standard*, February 12, 1958.

"WPA Spends Huge Sum on Aviation Work in Montana." *The Helena Independent*, 2 November 1936.

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☒ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☒ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: Montana Department of Transportation

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.0

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude:	Longitude:
2. Latitude:	Longitude:
3. Latitude:	Longitude:
4. Latitude:	Longitude:

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 12 | Easting: 423943 | Northing: 5161461 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for the Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building measures 300 170 feet. The rectangle encompasses the main operations building, a garage, and a storage building. The boundary is centered on the operations building. The building is located in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 21, T10N, R3W.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building consists of three buildings associated with the operations of the Montana Aeronautics Division. The 2-acre property is enclosed by a chain link fence topped with barbed wire on the east, west and south sides of the property. It opens onto a Helena Regional Airport runway on the north. Three state-owned, but non-historic, buildings associated with Montana's aeronautics operations are situated east of the fence. Two of the three buildings on the Aeronautics Commission property are historic age and display a similar architecture.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jon Axline/Historian
organization: Montana Department of Transportation
street & number: 2701 Prospect Avenue
city or town: Helena state: MT zip code: 59620
e-mail: jaxline@mt.gov
telephone: (406) 444-6258
date: October XX, 2016

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic
District
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark, MT
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of ____.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

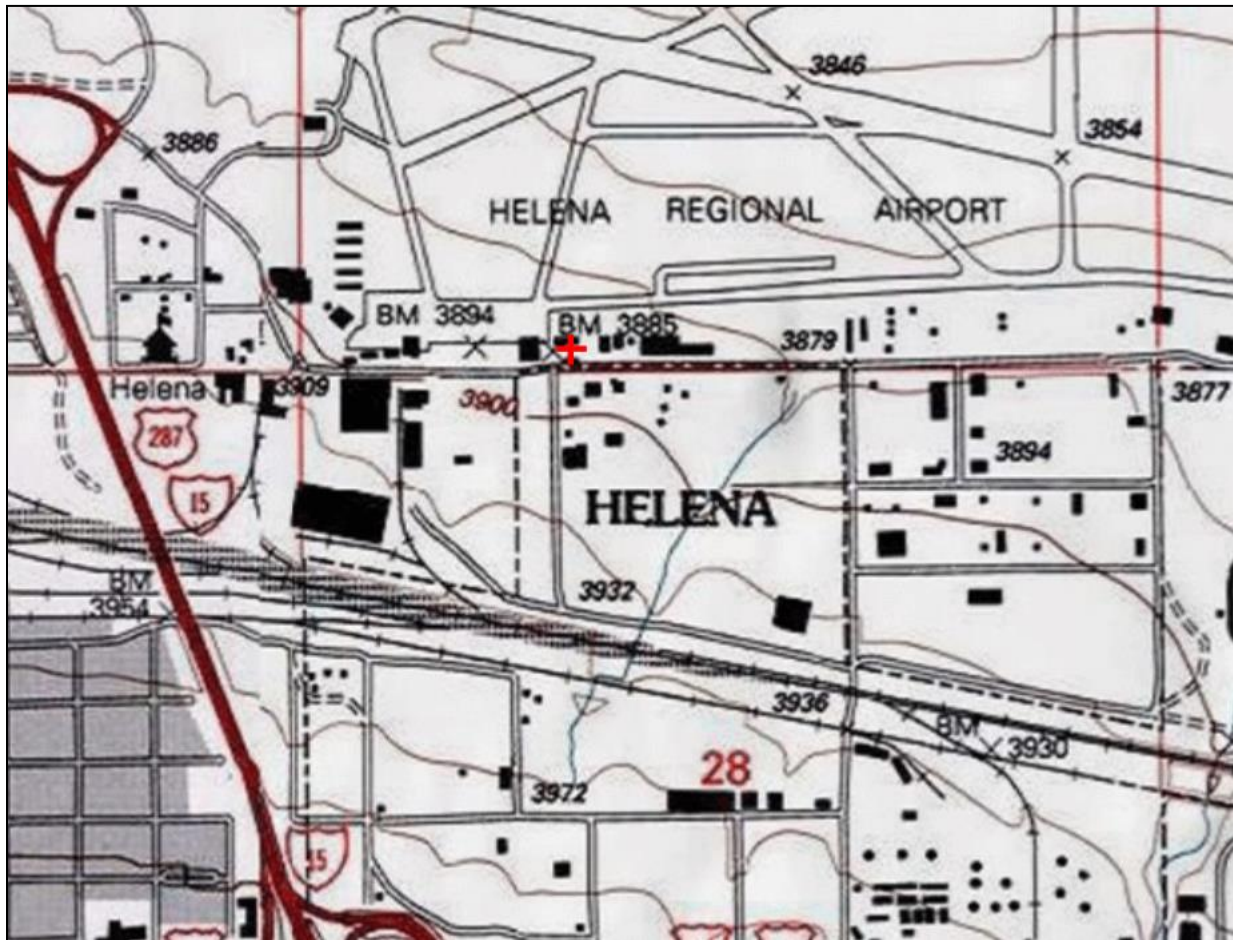
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Maps and Historic Photographs Page 31



Location of the Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. Found on the USGS 7.5' Quadrangle map: Helena (provisional 1985).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

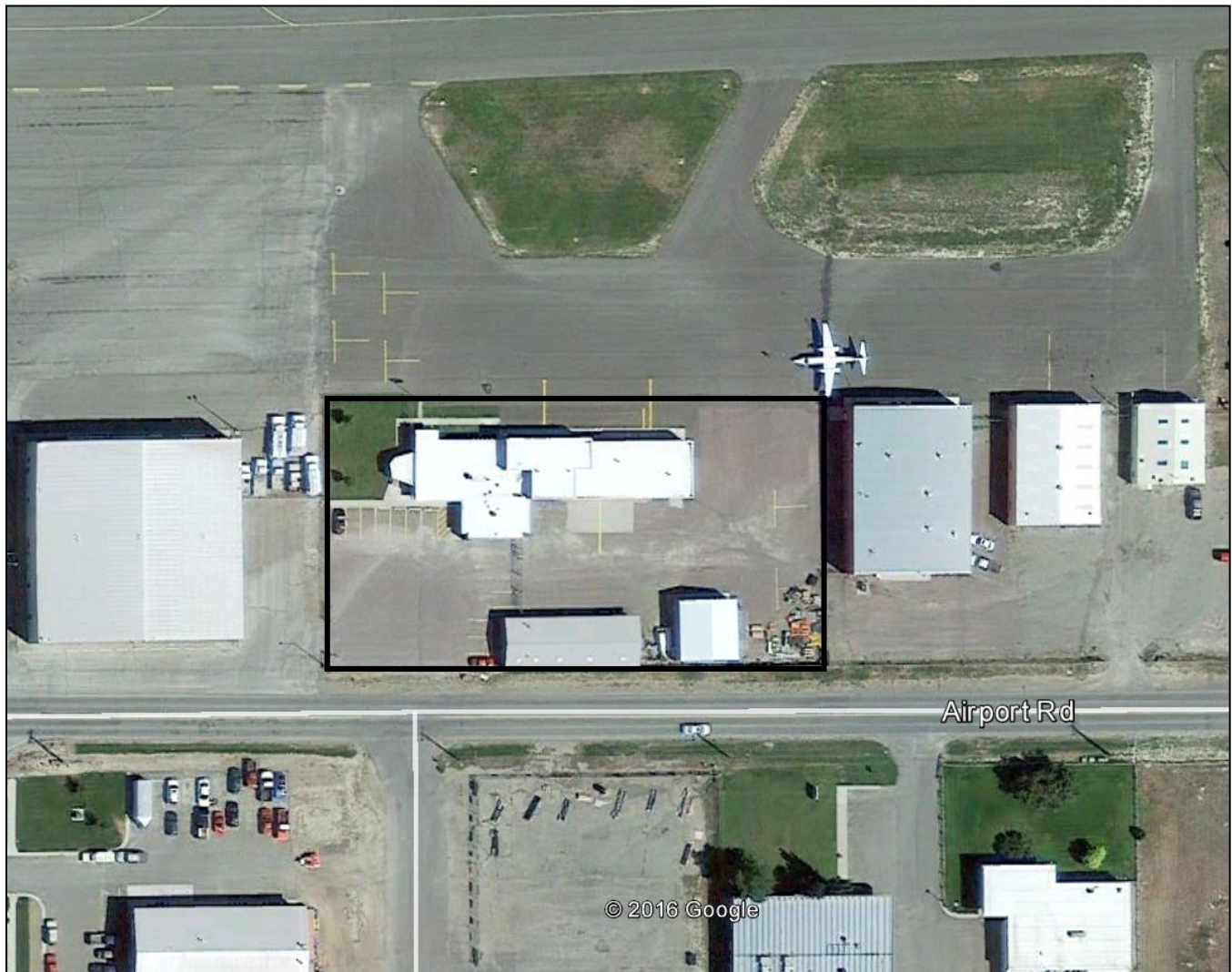
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Maps and Historic Photographs Page 32



Aerial view of Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District, Helena, MT

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

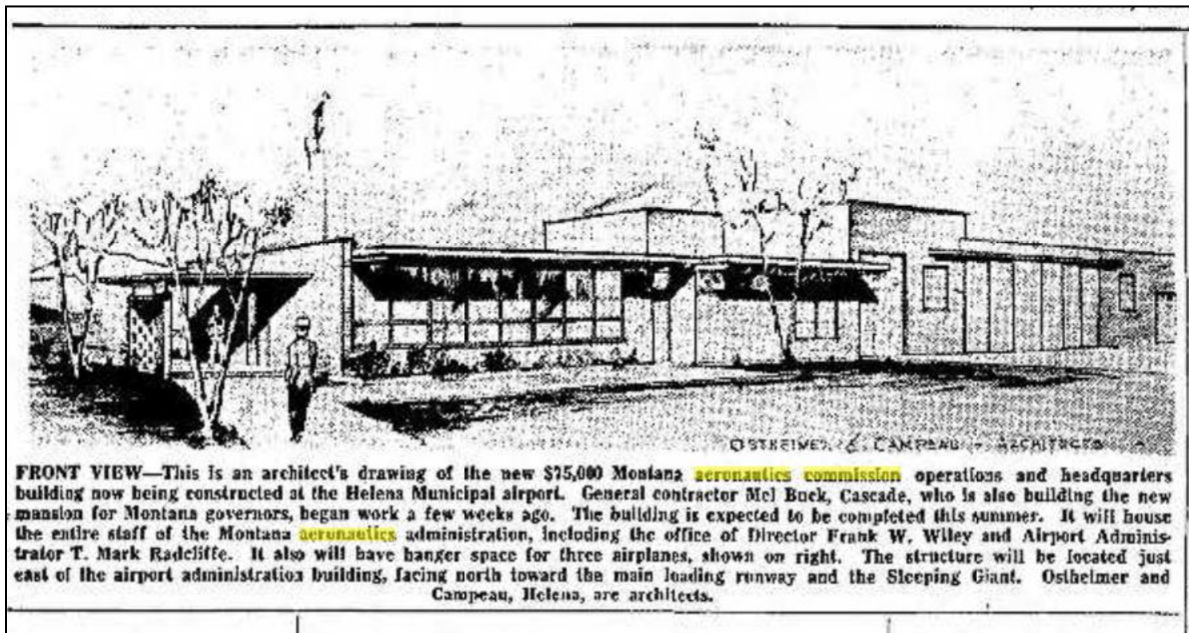
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Maps and Historic Photographs Page 33



Architects Ostheimer & Campeau rendering of the Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. *The Helena Independent Record*, 23 February 1958.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

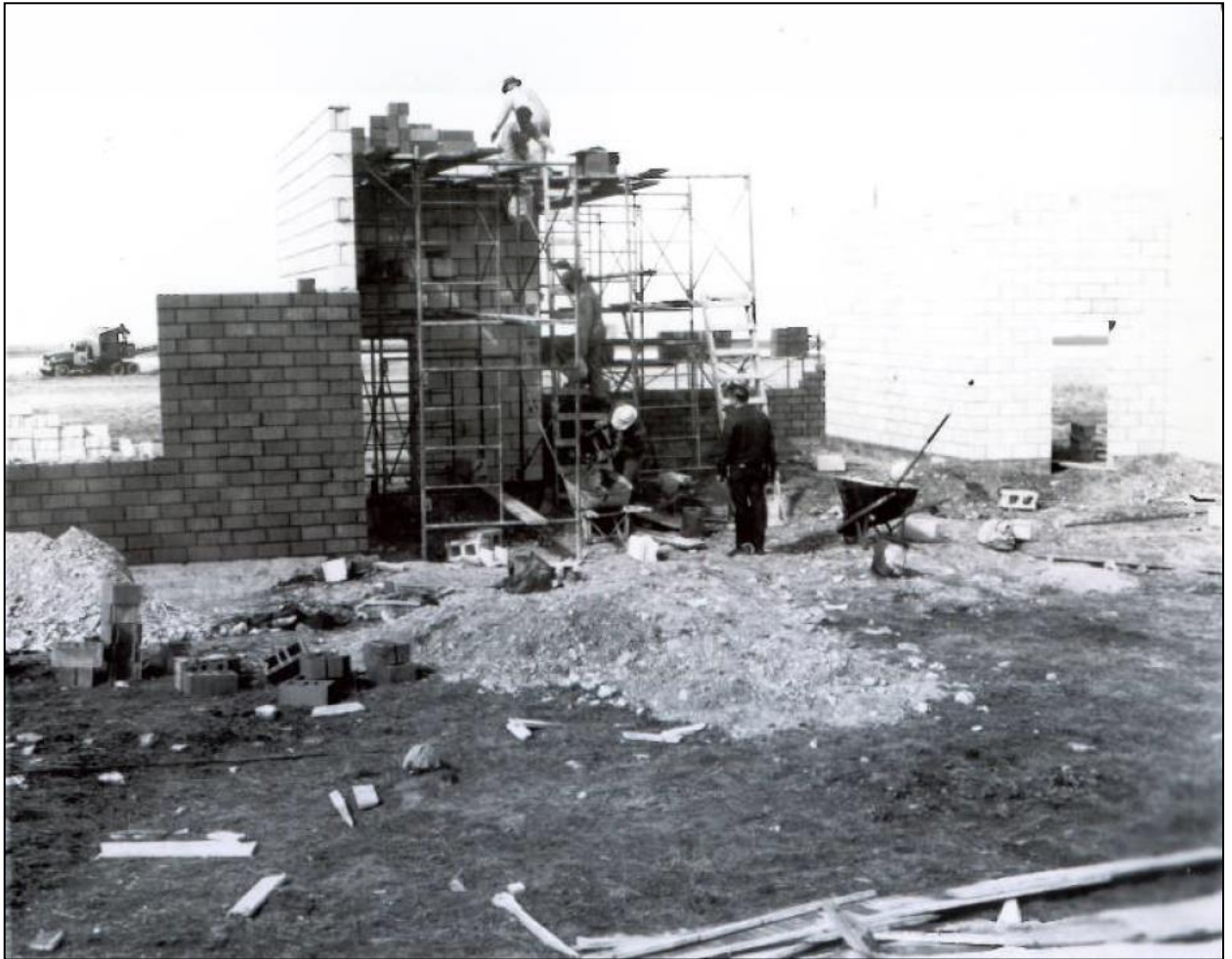
Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Maps and Historic Photographs Page 34



The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building under construction. Spring 1958.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District
Name of Property
Lewis and Clark County, Montana
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Maps and Historic Photographs Page 35



The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building nearing completion. View to the east.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District
Name of Property
Lewis and Clark County, Montana
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Maps and Historic Photographs Page 36



The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building under construction. North façade. View to the southeast.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District
Name of Property
Lewis and Clark County, Montana
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Maps and Historic Photographs Page 37



**The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building at completion, July 1958.
South façade. View to the northeast.**

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Historic District
Name of Property
Lewis and Clark County, Montana
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Maps and Historic Photographs Page 38



**The Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building at completion, July 1958.
North façade. View to the southeast.**

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission
Operations Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number National Register Photographs

Page 39

National Register Photographs



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: October 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Overview, Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. South façade. View to the northeast.
Photograph: 0001
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0001

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission
Operations Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number National Register Photographs

Page 40



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: October 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Overview, Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. West elevation and north façade. View to the southeast.
Photograph: 0002
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0002

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission
Operations Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number National Register Photographs

Page 41



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: October 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Overview, Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. North façade and east elevation. View to the southwest.
Photograph: 0003
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0003

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission
Operations Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis & Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number National Register Photographs

Page 42



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: October 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Overview, Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. North façade. View to south.
Photograph: 0004
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0004

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs

Page 43



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: October 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Overview, Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. East elevation and south façade. View to northwest.
Photograph: 0005
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0005

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs

Page 44



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: October 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Overview, Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. South elevation. View to the northeast.
Photograph: 0006
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0006

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs

Page 45



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: August 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building.
Detail of screen wall. View to the northeast.
Photograph: 0007
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0007

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs

Page 46



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)

County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana

Photographer: Jon Axline

Date of Photograph: August 2016

Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.

Description and view of camera: Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building.

Montana Aeronautics Commission plaque and detail of brick.

Photograph: 0008

MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0008

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs Page 47



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: October 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Overview, Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. North façade. View to the southwest.
Photograph: 0009
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0009

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs Page 48



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: August 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building.
Detail. North facade. View to the west.
Photograph: 0010
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0010

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs

Page 49



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: October 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Overview, Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. South façade (1965 addition). View to the northwest.
Photograph: 0011
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0011

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs

Page 50



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: August 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations Building. Hanger on main building (1965). South façade. View to the north.
Photograph: 0012
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0012

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs Page 51



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: August 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Garage. Façade. View to the south.
Photograph: 0013
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0013

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs

Page 52



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: August 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Garage. East elevation and façade. View to the southwest.
Photograph: 0014
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0014

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs Page 53



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: August 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Garage. South (rear) façade. View to the northwest
Photograph: 0015
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0015

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Montana Aeronautics Commission Operations
Historic District

Name of Property

Lewis and Clark County, Montana

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation National Register Photographs Page 54



Name: Montana Aeronautics Operations HD (24LC2192)
County and State: Lewis & Clark County, Montana
Photographer: Jon Axline
Date of Photograph: August 2016
Location of original negative: Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, MT.
Description and view of camera: Storage Building. View to the southwest.
Photograph: 0016
MT_Lewis&ClarkCounty_MontanaAeronauticsCommissionOperationsHD_0016